

for Boeing's Evolved Expendable Launch Vehicle and NASA's Rocket Based Combined Cycle test facility.

Mr. President, Mr. Power is married to the former Susan Foreman of Crowley, LA. They have two children, a 7-year-old son Brandon and a 5-year-old daughter Madison, and are expecting their third child next year in March. Mr. Power will return to NASA Stennis Space Center to continue his endeavors in the area of rocket propulsion testing. I will truly miss his experience and assistance he has provided to me, and I wish him all the very best as he helps NASA advance its efforts in the areas of space propulsion and remote sensing in the 21st century.

RECLASSIFICATION OF SCRANTON-WILKES BARRE-HAZLETON, WILLIAMSPORT, AND SHARON METROPOLITAN STATISTICAL AREAS

Mr. SANTORUM. Mr. President, I wish to thank the senior Senator from Pennsylvania for working with me on this very important issue of Medicare provider payment policy, particularly in light of the unique financial pressures being faced by the hospitals in Scranton-Wilkes Barre, Williamsport, and Sharon metropolitan statistical areas, MSAs, which emanate in part from some glaring disparities in Medicare's payment formulas.

As I travel around the Commonwealth, many health care leaders have conveyed to me their continued concerns about the impact of the Balanced Budget Act of 1997, BBA, on their health care delivery operations. Our Pennsylvania constituents, who represent rural, urban and community hospitals and systems, have shared with us detailed information about the financially strained health care delivery environment under the BBA.

We are all aware of the administrative and financial challenges that health care providers all across the country face, particularly in their service to our Nation's elderly population. But the environment in which the hospitals in these three areas of Pennsylvania are seeking to deliver quality health care to their respective communities is even more challenging given that their MSAs contain areas or border on areas from which higher compensated providers, with similar health care delivery costs, draw their patients, and more importantly, their workforce. Facilities located in these areas must compete for workers and patients against hospitals in neighboring MSAs with drastically higher wage indices, even when labor and health care delivery costs are virtually identical. This situation is simply not sustainable.

And these problems are only exacerbated by our Nation's ongoing nursing shortage, and the scarcity of other skilled care givers. Health care work-

force shortages are particularly acute in these areas of the Commonwealth, and they have the effect of driving up the cost of health care and precipitating the need to increase wages. And although these hospitals have taken the step of increasing wages, further reductions in the wage index will make it impossible for the hospitals to retain or recruit all the caregivers that the communities require.

Other regions near the Scranton-Wilkes Barre-Hazleton MSA, including Newburgh, Allentown and Harrisburg, continue to recruit workers from its skilled workforce.

Likewise in the Sharon MSA: All of the hospitals in the Sharon MSA compete with the Youngstown, OH, MSA for nurses, pharmacists, radiology technicians, and other allied health professionals. As Senator SPECTER had mentioned, Youngstown pays nurses \$2 to \$3 more per hour than hospitals in Sharon, yet those hospitals receive the lowest area wage index in Pennsylvania.

I have been working on this unique Medicare payment problem for more than 2 years now, seeking to enact at least a temporary reclassification of several Northeastern Pennsylvania counties into the Newburgh, NY—Pennsylvania MSA; Northumberland County into the Harrisburg-Lebanon-Carlisle MSA; and Mercer County into the Youngstown-Warren, OH, MSA. As Senator SPECTER had mentioned, there are other areas around the country where glitches such as these can be found. And what we seek to do with the submission of this legislative language is to put our colleagues on notice that we are determined to work on a bipartisan basis to bring much needed relief to our negatively affected hospitals, and to do the same for other areas around the country where these circumstances have caused similar problems and merit similar response.

I have recently spoken directly with Senate Finance Committee Ranking Member GRASSLEY about this very issue, and my strong desire to achieve a legislative fix as soon as possible. I am also a strong supporter of legislation to set the rural wage index nationally at a uniform and higher rate. However, whether or not Congress considers a national solution to this area of Medicare law is unclear, and our hospitals cannot afford to wait for a national solution that may be a year or two away.

In closing, I wish to relay to our colleagues that achieving this financial relief for these hospitals in Pennsylvania is of utmost importance to myself and Senator SPECTER. We are willing to work with our colleagues in any way in order to bring about stability in the funding of these community health care providers and to ensure that the many Medicare beneficiaries living in the Commonwealth have access to needed care.

HONORING MONTANANS FACING THE SEPTEMBER 11TH TRAGEDY

Mr. BURNS. Mr. President, some time has passed since the tragic events that took place in New York, Washington, DC, and Pennsylvania. Nevertheless, I want to reflect upon the events of that day and draw attention to the tremendous good that has evolved in the face of evil. Since that time, it has become evident that the American public is the most patriotic and resilient group the world will ever see. Those who may have been strangers are now confidants, those who were acquaintances are now considered family.

During this trying time, I want both to express my heartfelt condolences to all those directly involved in this tragedy, and to commend and honor those who have devoted their soul to working to restore tranquility and normalcy to the Nation. From firehouses to schoolhouses, from New York City to San Francisco and everywhere in between, Americans have repeatedly demonstrated their capacity for compassion.

I want to begin by addressing the families of those who lost their lives on United flight 93. I cannot begin to comfort them in their grief, but I must say that they have every reason to be extremely proud of the bravery shown by those on Flight 93. Their efforts are commended by all who stand here in Congress. As Americans, we all recognize, that we owe your family a debt that cannot be repaid.

Montanans have been deeply affected by this tragedy; they have contacted me with their grief, their hope for victory, and their desire to aid in the relief effort. Tragically, Adam Larson of Choteau, MT, was an employee of Aon Corp., located on what was the 103rd floor of the World Trade Center. In the midst of the attacks, he phoned his wife Patti and told her the building was being evacuated and he was on his way to safety. He was last seen by his co-workers following them down the stairs to exit the building, a building he never escaped. Adam Larson was 37 years old, and senior vice president for Aon. Many think that because of his outwardly giving personality, he may have stopped to help someone in need. I, along with Montanans everywhere grieve with the Larson family, pray for hope, and express our sincere support in enduring a set of circumstances that is difficult to comprehend.

In addition to grief, Montanans have also displayed the characteristic resolve that has defined us since our statehood. From Libby to Great Falls to Alzada, Montana has joined together to show patriotism and support for the American effort. Blood drives are going on at Malmstrom Air Force base in Great Falls, MT, as I speak today. Percentages of all sales in the town of Conrad, MT, are being designated for the relief effort.